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English 101 – Dr. Sherry

**Commuting vs. Residential Students**

**Problem**

Many senior students from around this area who are interested in going to Bloomsburg University face one difficult decision; should they commute or reside in a dorm? While both commuting and residing at Bloomsburg University play different roles in social life, education, and finance, it is important for all incoming freshman to make the most fitting decision for themselves as well as for what the future has in store. The transition from high school to college is such a big step and it is so significant to start the process with knowledge to help reach the most logical and reasonable choice. What are the major advantages and disadvantages of commuting or residing at Bloomsburg University, and what will help one become successful both during and after college?

**Background**

Numerous studies have examined differences between students who live on campus and those that commute to college, with some studies suggesting that students who live on campus tend to have advantages over those who commute to campus (Peterson, 1975). Many studies discuss the significant differences between student’s involvement on campus, levels of stress, time spent working, academic performance, as well as major differences in cost. Peterson (1975) has suggested “residence hall dwellers are better off financially, educationally, and in other ways to begin with. Then, largely because of their greater involvement in various educational and developmental activities, they make significantly greater gains, particularly in nonacademic personal development” (p. 2). In short there are many benefits to dorming at a university in these specific areas. At a miz-sized Southwestern state university, demographic differences between 108 commuter students and 345 residential students were examined by Newbold, Mehta, and Forbus (2011). With this study, they were able to conclude that commuter students were much less active in on campus activities than residential students. According to a study conducted by Kuh, Gonyea, and Palmer (2001), “residential students were more engaged in effective educational practices and – in all likelihood – were more likely benefitting more from their college experience” (p. 6) “…driving commuters really do have less contact with their teachers and do not take advantage of such opportunities as co-curricular activities, community service, study abroad, internships, and so forth” (p. 8). Think about it, if students aren’t around the campus, how are they going take advantage of these opportunities presented to them? “It appears that further away a student lives from campus, the less likely a student is to take advantage of the educational resources of the school.” (p. 9). This is common sense, why would a student drive out of their way to use the school’s resources and waste gas, when they could simply just use what they have at home or around their surrounding area? Across these studies, it is evident that commuter students do not get involved as often compared to residential students. They claim to want to get more involved, and feel more connected with the university community but can’t. I also found that many authors and researchers claim that commuter students are far more stressed. Barbara D. Davis (p. 74) as well claims that it is difficult for commuter students to connect to the campus. When one commutes, they have a tendency to get to class on time, and then leave as the class ends, which creates the issue of not getting involved. After my research, as well as personal experience, I feel that commuting students either choose not to or feel out of place when it comes to getting involved with other class members, and participating in campus activities.

**Method**

I decided to use the method of interviewing because it is best to hear other people’s honest opinions about this specific topic. To answer these questions, I interviewed two freshman female students, one who was commuting to Bloomsburg University, and the other who was staying in a dorm (**INtroduce)**.

**Findings**

(**INsert**)

Interview #1: Commuting Student – Bloomsburg University

The first person I interviewed was a student who commuted to Bloomsburg University. The first question I asked was why did she decide to commute to college? She felt that by commuting to college it saved her a lot of money, and she has a quiet study environment. Also with working almost 20 hours a week, she felt it would be easier on her to commute. The next question I asked was if she regretted her decision to commute rather than dorm. She replied “No, not really. Sometimes I get upset though because I don't really get the whole "college experience". It definitely keeps me out of trouble though.” The last question had to deal with grades, whether she felt if she would get better grades dorming or while commuting. Her reply was “When I’m at home at night trying to get homework done on a computer, I sometimes wish I could just walk to the library because I know I’d be a lot more successful. The only place I do homework in my house is on my bed… which is very distracting”. After this interview I realized the she was okay with commuting, but thought it would be more beneficial to stay on campus.

Interview #2: Dorm Student – Bloomsburg Univerisity

The second interview dealt with a student who dorms at Bloomsburg University. The questions I asked were very similar to the first interview, that way we could compare their decisions. In order the first question I asked was why did you decide to dorm at Bloomsburg University? She replied “I just wanted to see what college was really about; I needed time to get away on my own, away from everything to see what life is really about.” The second question I asked was what do you really enjoy about your decision to dorm? Her answer was “I really like that I am getting the full college experience. I am meeting so many new people, studying with a group often, sharing a room with my best friend and walking everywhere I need to go. I also like that I don’t need to rely on my parents for everything now.” The last question I asked was what do you dislike about your decision? “As of now, there is nothing that I dislike. I’m so close to home so if I absolutely need something I can just go home for whatever I need” she replied. From interviewing this student who chose to stay on campus, I came to a conclusion that she really liked the dorming experience. She felt that there were positives to this, and felt that this was the right decision to make rather than to commute to school.

Across these interviews, it is evident that the two students wanted to dorm simply because of the “college experience”(**INterpret**). While some think saving money is the best route, some disagree and think the experience is more important. As I was interviewing the student who decided to commute, it seemed as though she regretted her decision simply because she was not making as many friends and she wasn’t as involved on campus as she had hoped. Making friends seems difficult if one is commuting, and it is very important to have friends as part of the college experience.

**Conclusion**

Based on my ethnographic data, college culture while residing on campus, as well as at home are two very different experiences. There seems to be far more advantages to dorming at a University than commuting, simply because of the “college experience”, including education. If one is living on campus, they are more than likely going to use the resources that are available to them, such as the library, professors, friends, and study groups. Those who commute get to class on time, then head home immediately, which leaves no time to connect to the University. The data that I have collected confirms what Peterson (1975) and Kuh, Gonyea, and Palmer (2001) have noticed. If one live on campus, they have better chances of making friends, getting involved, and taking advantage of the resources they need to get a better grade. Personally, I am faced with this problem as well, and I now feel more informed on my two choices in this decision process. Overall, it is quite evident that those who stay on campus have far more advantages then those who commute.

Works Cited

*Alfano, H. J., & Eduljee, N. B. (n.d.). Differences in work, levels of involvement, and academic performance between residential and commuter students.*

*Davis, B. D. (n.d.). Encouraging commuter students connectivity.*